

Performance the name of game

Surgeon leads development of new sports science program

By Dan Carter
Standard Staff Writer

When Dr. Michael Schutte moved to Montana from Ohio in 1985, his plans were to escape the helter-skelter atmosphere of urban life and use his extensive experience with football, basketball and dance professionals to develop a top-rate sports trauma clinic for some of Montana's amateur athletes.

What the 34-year-old orthopedic surgeon didn't plan on was helping develop a major sports science program for world-class athletes.

During the next few years, as director of sports science at the United States High Altitude Sports Center in Butte, Schutte will work to bring together the latest knowledge in physical therapy, biomechanics and sports training to develop a quality sports science program to compliment the facility.

"If this is a national resource, and people think of it in those terms, then you have to have some part of this (sports science) in the center," said Schutte, who operates the Missoula Sports Injury Clinic and travels to Butte once a week to see patients. "If you don't, the athletes will come in and out of here and after ... five years, we won't know anymore (about the athletes and how they perform) than we do know."

Judy Martz, executive director of the High Altitude Sports Center, said Schutte will develop a scientific program that deals more with performance than a medical program that deals with rehabilitation of sports injury.

"What we're looking for is to make people better athletes," she said.

Communist countries have been doing per-

formance testing for years, said Martz, who was a speedskater for the United States during the 1964 Olympics, but, she added, programs to test and monitor athletic performance in America are still in their infancy.

Part of developing a sports science program for the sports center involves not only training programs to enhance performance, but also a biomechanics program that will study how an athlete's movements help or hinder his overall performance, Schutte said.



SCHUTTE

Butte for November's World Cup meet.

Training programs would be developed to fix the flaws, he said, and ideally, the training regimen would help reduce an athlete's susceptibility to injury.

Dr. Anthony Konecny, a Butte doctor who will be working as the general physician for the sports science program, said the program will involve a broad disciplinary team approach to taking care of athletes.

"Our ultimate goal is with lots of athletes being here, there is a definite opportunity to further establish the U.S. High Altitude Sports Center as a top-notch, national sports center," Konecny said. "We want to offer much more to the skaters than just a rink."

Organizing health care teams to look after the training and physical needs of Olympic athletes is something that stemmed from clinics that serve professional football and basketball organizations. Developing a similar program in Butte, Konecny said, would make the sports center a "regional resource" for athletes in the Inland Northwest.

After finishing medical school at Louisiana State University, Schutte received a fellowship specializing in sports trauma at The Cleveland Clinic, which has developed one of the most noted sports science programs in the country.

While in Cleveland, Schutte served as the team orthopedist for the Cleveland State University athletic program and served as assistant team orthopedist for the Cleveland Cavaliers professional basketball team and the Cleveland Browns professional football team.

He also served as an orthopedic specialist for the Cleveland Ballet and was on the medical advisory team for the U.S. Karate team.

It was during his tenure with The Cleveland Clinic that Schutte developed his philosophy of coordinating performance testing with training for athletes.

"Maximizing performance and minimizing injury is the name of the game," he said. "You can never get rid of the risk (of injury), but you can minimize it."